

IRAN NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HOLDING) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLDING. Madam Speaker, the Foreign Affairs Committee heard last week about the tremendous challenges that remain in order to verify Iran's compliance with any possible final nuclear agreement.

Should a deal be reached, the most stringent compliance, verification, and notification standards must be in place, including regular reporting to Congress. As I have said many times on this floor, I firmly believe Iran has no inherent right to enrich any nuclear material and that any deal should completely dismantle their nuclear infrastructure.

A potential agreement would likely be hailed by this administration—an administration that puts politics before policy—as a foreign policy victory, which leads to an important question: Can this administration be trusted to uphold any compliance regime and fully inform Congress and the American people of even the smallest infraction by the regime in Tehran?

If Iran commits even the smallest infraction, such as installing one centrifuge above the deal's limits, will this administration blow the whistle and jeopardize a deal in which they have invested so much political capital?

This administration has shown, most recently with their Taliban prisoner swap, that they have no problem flaunting their responsibility to timely inform and consult Congress of their actions, but with a deal like the Iranian nuclear negotiation that has far-reaching national security implications, this administration must not leave the people's Representatives in the dark.

ISSUES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise to address issues in the Middle East. The President has been criticized for the fact that we do not have a large residual force in Iraq and that we do not have a status of forces agreement with the Iraqi Government.

Let us take note that it was President George Bush who installed Prime Minister Maliki in May of 2006. President George Bush's decision to allow Maliki to take power and to allow him to keep power is directly responsible for most of the woes facing Iraq today.

Maliki was so malevolent that, throughout 2006, 2007, and 2008, he refused to enter into a long-term status of forces agreement with the United States and with President Bush. He insisted that any troops that remained in Iraq after 2011 would be subject to Iraqi kangaroo courts and could be executed

on trumped-up charges. Obviously, we couldn't leave our troops in Iraq under those circumstances.

It is Maliki that is the source of the problem, and it is President Bush that is the source of Maliki. To say that President Obama should be able to negotiate a long-term agreement with Maliki when President Bush was unable to do so is utterly absurd.

As to Sergeant Bergdahl, it is important for us to note that, while we have just released five prisoners from Guantanamo, President Bush released over 500 from Guantanamo, and virtually all of them were dangerous.

Over 100 of them are on the battlefield—and we know where on the battlefield they are—waging war against the United States and its allies. Most of the other 500 are also waging war against us; it is just that our intelligence isn't good enough to say exactly where on the battlefield they are located.

What did President Bush get for the release, not of five, but 500 dangerous prisoners from Guantanamo? Nothing, except a thank you from their native governments.

Now, on legal issues, we are told that section 1035 of the National Defense Authorization Act required President Obama not to release the five prisoners until 30 days after he notified Congress.

Even if he had followed those exact words, instead of releasing the five a few hours after Sergeant Bergdahl was in our hands, we would have released them a few weeks after Sergeant Bergdahl was back in our hands, hardly of great significance.

More importantly, the President has the constitutional right, as Commander in Chief, to engage in prisoner exchanges. In fact, the last Republican Attorney General of the United States, Michael Mukasey, said that very thing just recently.

The President was on firm legal ground in deciding he had the authority to take this action without a 30-day notification of Congress. That being said, it would have been preferable if President Obama had, in fact, discussed the matter with key congressional leaders.

America is strongest when the President views Congress as a source of counsel, a source of advice, rather than a group of enemies to be notified only when such notification is explicitly compelled by congressionally valid statutes.

Whether this deal is a good deal, time will tell. It was a judgment call, but the President could have benefited from the counsel of Congress. It is particularly insulting for some to say that Congress is not a source of counsel, but just a source of leaks.

Keep in mind that 16 congressional leaders knew that we had ascertained the hiding place of Osama bin Laden, and that information did not leak from Congress.

I hope, in the future, President Obama and future Presidents consult

key Members of Congress when making a difficult decision.

We are told that we don't negotiate with terrorists. Nothing could be further from the truth. President Bush negotiated with each and every terrorist regime, each and every identified state sponsor of terrorism—Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria, North Korea.

The Bush administration paid a ransom to an al Qaeda affiliate for the release of Martin and Gracia Burnham. Secretary Colin Powell designated the Afghan Taliban as an organization authorized for legal negotiations.

Now, it is also said that a prisoner exchange alerts our enemies to the fact that we value our prisoners, that we will not want to leave anyone on the battlefield, as if this is news disclosed to the world in June of 2014. The fact is we have always valued those detained by the enemy, and the enemy has always known that.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS SET GREAT EXAMPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GALLEGOS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GALLEGOS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to take note not only of a wonderful victory, but of a great example. The most popular NBA team in the 23rd District and one of the most popular NBA teams in the entire country, the San Antonio Spurs, are now the NBA champions, for the fifth time—the drive for five.

There are some interesting things that Congress and the American people can learn from the Spurs. It is the most culturally diverse team in the NBA. In addition to Americans, there are folks from Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, and Australia.

Tim Duncan, who has spent his entire career with the San Antonio Spurs, started out playing basketball in the ninth grade, after he was not able to swim anymore because the swimming pool he used in the Virgin Islands was destroyed.

□ 1215

None of the players are among the highest paid in the league. In fact, Tony Parker is the highest paid player and he ranked number 37 in the NBA. Five championships, some heartbreakingly close calls. In fact, last year they lost in the very last minute, but they never gave up. They continued working. They came back, and this year they won it all.

The Spurs have the greatest coach in the NBA. Coach Popovich has been in San Antonio since 1996. He is the longest-tenured active coach in all Big Four sports leagues, and he has the most consecutive winning seasons, including playoffs, of any coach in the NBA—17.

The Spurs have so much they can share. Their cultural diversity is their strength. They won because they played together and they played as a

team. They trusted each other. They worked together. They didn't care who got the credit. One second you would be watching Tony Parker on a drive, the next second somebody else had the ball, and the next second they scored.

All of these examples of working together, teamwork, understanding, and knowing that cultural diversity is a strength, all of these things, that drive and that determination, that practice every day, day in and day out, all of those things are examples that are well-suited to those of us who serve in Congress and well-suited to the American public at large. Never give up; never quit. That patchwork quilt of a basketball team is the same mosaic that represents all of America.

And you know what? They weren't arrogant. They weren't hardcore. They come across just as they are, as humble, decent, good-hearted human beings. They are clearly the 23rd District's favorite basketball team. In fact, I have the privilege of representing several of them who live in the 23rd District. I think the more that America gets to know them, they will soon be America's most popular basketball team.

Congratulations to each and every member of the NBA champs, the San Antonio Spurs, their coaches, their staff, their owners, and congratulations to each and every one of their fans.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 17 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SMITH of Nebraska) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: God of grace and goodness, thank You for giving us another day.

Your divine wisdom and power are abundantly sufficient for our many needs. Endow the Members of this assembly with a loyalty that never wavers and a courage that never falters as they seek to fulfill the high and holy mission which You have entrusted to them.

May it be their purpose, and all of ours, to see to the hopes of so many Americans that we authenticate the grandeur and glory of the ideals and principles of our democracy with the work we do.

As the House returns from visits to their respective districts, may we all

be mindful of and thankful for our fathers, or the men who were father figures for us, whose love and support enabled us to mature and become productive members of our American society.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WELCH led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

COMMON GROUND ON STUDENT LOAN REFORM

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, President Obama recently announced some changes to student loan repayment programs. Keeping with the pattern of his administration, he has chosen to impose those changes via the regulatory process.

For a while now, President Obama has been fond of saying he has a "pen and a phone" that he will use to codify his version of hope and change. Perhaps the pen is sufficient, but the regulatory process will take 18 months. The House is reauthorizing the Higher Education Act.

Working together, student loan reforms could be considered passed and implemented much sooner if only President Obama would pick up the phone, talk with Members of Congress, and find common ground; but that takes effort, and the President does not seem inclined to call.

Mr. Speaker, it seems this President has become so addicted to the pen that he no longer knows how to pick up the telephone.

INACTION LEADS TO NEW ATTACKS

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as Islamic terrorists seize control of major Iraqi cities, it is clear that the President's failure to secure a status of forces agreement has jeopardized

the progress our military made to promote democracy and peace in the region.

We have known for years that the Iraqi Government was struggling to implement democracy. Instead of offering help, the President ignored lessons learned of successfully maintaining peace with an American reserve of air defense, as we have done in Germany, Japan, Korea, and now in Kosovo.

Even now, as the Middle East watches to see how the United States will react to the current crisis, the President is putting our families at risk as he negotiates with terrorists and communicates with Israel's enemies.

The President needs to change course, recognize the growing threat of international terrorism, and understand that failed diplomacy and inaction allows the creation of safe havens to attack us again.

Peace can only be maintained by strength as the terrorists proclaim: Death to America, and death to Israel. They mean it.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism with freedom to prevail.

THE VAPORIZING OF TWO YEARS OF IRS EMAILS

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, crisis: IRS emails have vaporized.

Where, oh, where have the emails gone? Where, oh, where can they be? In another Friday evening news dump, the administration announced that 2 years of Lois Lerner's emails have vanished. Poof, gone.

That is not all. Today, we learned that the emails of six other prominent IRS officials involved in targeting conservatives have disappeared. Poof, gone. Isn't that an oddly convenient disappearance?

Have they gone to the same place the missing 18 minutes of Nixon's Watergate tapes went? The IRS blames the well-timed fiasco on a computer glitch.

Mr. Speaker, what do you suppose would happen if the IRS came to a citizen's home to audit their taxes and the citizen said, sorry, the records were lost in a computer crash? The tax collector would laugh.

It is time for a special prosecutor to investigate the IRS and find out where, oh, where have those emails gone. This yarn by the IRS requires a willing suspension of disbelief. Mr. Speaker, that dog just won't hunt.

And that's just the way it is.

HAMAS KIDNAPPINGS

(Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring attention to a serious